

your States, in our States, and they are going to be saying: We don't know what happened to us, but we do know that before we went and served, we could run 2 miles and we felt good, and now we can't walk a half mile, and we don't know what happened to us.

Over and over again, we are seeing report after report that makes it crystal clear that the gulf war veterans have every reason in the world to be indignant about not getting information that they need to get from our Government and, more important, about their need to receive some care. So what in the world are we doing cutting \$400 million in the veterans health care budget?

In addition, Mr. President, let me simply point out that above and beyond the gulf war veterans, we have a situation where our veterans population is aging. More and more of our veterans are living to be 65 years of age and over. More and more of our veterans are living to be 85 years of age and over. And this is an additional strain.

So, Mr. President, I want to point out that, at the very time that veterans are showing up at VA hospitals in greater numbers, with increasing health care costs generally and prospects for greater medical costs specifically, at the very time that we have that going on, we have a cut in this budget resolution.

So, what we are saying in this amendment—and I will defer to my colleague from Iowa in a moment—we are saying, look, we have an excess \$2.6 billion. It is more than the Pentagon asked for. We have a cut in veterans health care in the budget resolution to the tune of \$400 million. It is clear it is going to have very negative consequences for veterans. The veterans community in our Nation—I have just three letters, from the PVA, DAV, and Vietnam veterans, and they are saying: You can't do that. What about those of us who are struggling with posttraumatic stress syndrome? What about the Persian Gulf veterans? More and more are asking: What happened to us? More and more of those veterans are asking for adequate care. What about the ever-increasing aging population among veterans at the very time there is going to be more of a strain? At the very time that we have more of a challenge, you have cut \$400 million.

This is an opportunity to come through for the veterans community. I hope it will happen today. I hope we get a very strong vote today. I say this to all my colleagues. One way or another, we are going to have to restore this funding. This amendment, if you just think about the wording, just provides the Secretary of Defense with the authorization to transfer some of this funding to VA health care—\$400 million—and it makes eminently good sense because, after all, these veterans who come and seek health care within our VA health care system were the very men and women who served our country in defense of our country.

Mr. President, how much time do we have left?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is no time agreement.

Mr. GREGG addressed the Chair.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the Senator yield the floor?

Mr. WELLSTONE. Are we now debating this amendment?

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, if the Senator from Minnesota will yield for a question, I simply have about 3 minutes I would like to talk, and it has nothing to do with this amendment.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I would rather not yield the floor at the moment. But if my colleague wants to speak—do we have other Senators on the floor who want to speak on this amendment? My colleague from Iowa wants to speak on the amendment. If Senators want to cover other topics for a short period of time, I would be more than willing to defer to them. We want to try to make our case here before the vote. Can I ask my colleagues whether they are interested in debating this amendment?

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, I want to speak about 10 minutes on the Levin amendment. I would certainly be willing to allow the Senator to maintain his right to the floor, but this is unusual procedure. The Senator doesn't have a right to control the floor. He has a right to speak, but he doesn't have a right to control the flow of debate for others. I am willing to accommodate him, but this is an unusual procedure. Being the accommodating person that I am, I am willing to do it. At some point, we might have to ask if the Senator is through speaking and let somebody else speak.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, my amendment is pending now, I say to my colleague from Texas. The Levin amendment is not pending. I have not yielded the floor yet, but I would be more than willing—

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair advises the Senator from Minnesota that he can yield to his friend from Iowa for a question.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I suggest that we follow the normal rules. If the Senator wants to speak, we can go back and forth. That would be fine with this Senator.

Mr. WELLSTONE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from New Hampshire be allowed to speak and the Senator from Texas for 10 minutes and then that be followed by the Senator from Iowa.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

WARWICK MILLS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE WEAVED THE AIR BAG TO PROTECT THE PATHFINDER ON MARS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise on a matter that is not related specifi-

cally to this bill, although it has to do with the issue of national defense and technology, and that is the issue of our probe which is now on the planet Mars. What an exceptional thing it is, as we watch the TV pictures come back as they analyze the rocks of Mars and determine that this planet is a fascinating place. We set history and we can investigate the universe.

All of this is possible because of a product made in New Hampshire. I wanted to congratulate the Warwick Mills of New Ipswich, NH, a small company started in 1888. NASA decided they wanted to land this probe on Mars, and they had to go to the Warwick Mills to be able to do it. It is one of the few places in this world that still weaves in the old-fashioned way. They were able to put together this fabric. This is a picture of the probe on Mars and the fabric that allowed the probe to set down on Mars without being damaged, and it allows it now to wander around the planet Mars and learn about the history of that extraordinary planet and to further the knowledge of man dramatically.

So from a little mill in New Ipswich, NH, started in 1888, using old-fashioned weaving machines, we sent the material to Mars. So on behalf of the State of New Hampshire, I congratulate this little firm that is doing such an extraordinary job to advance the knowledge of America and the world.

I yield back my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, in response to what our colleague from New Hampshire has stated, it is a testament of the genius of small business that this wasn't a big scientific lab somewhere, this wasn't NASA with all of its billions; this was a small, independent business. I think we can all rejoice in that.

Mr. GREGG. I think the Senator from Texas has probably been to Ipswich and may have visited this small plant. We appreciate his interest. I thank the Senator.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998

The Senate continued with the consideration of the bill.

AMENDMENT NO. 778

Mr. GRAMM. Mr. President, we have a pending amendment, the Levin amendment, which I am strongly opposed to. Let me just basically state what I would like to do. I would like to set the issue in perspective. I am now working with the Federal Prison Industries to see if there might be a second-degree amendment they could support. I intend to try to work with Senator LEVIN and his staff to see if something can be worked out. But I am strongly opposed to this.

Let me begin with Alexis de Tocqueville and work up to the Levin amendment. When Alexis de Tocqueville came to America, he came